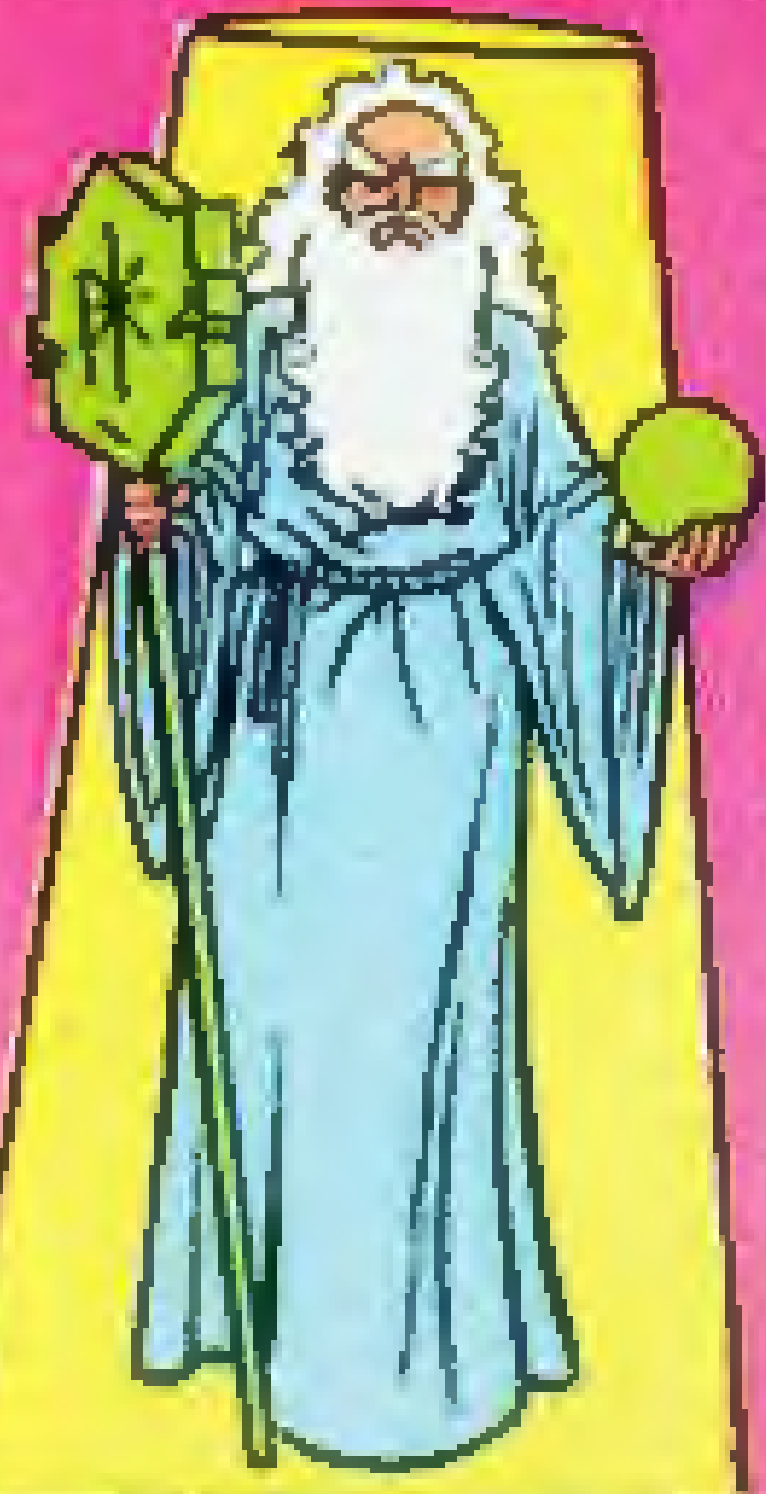


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**MARVEL**<sup>®</sup>

# VISIONARIES

Knights of the Magical Light



**STAR!**  
THE NEW  
WORLD IN THE  
MARVEL  
UNIVERSE!

**SCREAM  
OF THE  
SKY CLAW!**



# THE BALANCE OF POWER

ONLY A FEW SHORT MOMENTS AGO THESE WARRIORS OF THE PLANET PRYSMOS STOOD WITHIN IRON MOUNTAIN, MYSTIC FORTRESS OF THE WIZARD KNOWN AS MERKLYN, WHOSE SORCERY IMBUEE EACH OF THEM WITH AS-YET-UNKNOWN MAGICAL POWERS...

THEN, WITH A WORD FROM MERKLYNN, THEY WERE INSTANTLY AND MYSTICALLY TRANSPORTED TO THE SHATTERED LAND AT THE MOUNTAIN'S BASE, WHERE THEY HEAR A PROPHECY FILLED BOTH WITH MENACE AND HOPE...

ONE FINAL WORD, BRAVE KNIGHTS! WITH THE POWERS YOU NOW POSSESS, YOU CAN EITHER **REBUILD** THIS WONDROUS WORLD--

--OR **DESTROY** IT ALL! THE FATE OF PRYSMOS IS IN YOUR HANDS!

JIM SALICRUP • PLOT  
GERRY CONWAY • SCRIPT  
MARK BAGLEY • PENCILS  
ROMEO TANGHAL • INKS  
JANICE CHIANG • LETTERS  
JULIANNA FERRITER • COLORS  
BOB BUDIANSKY • EDITOR  
TOM DEFALCO • EDITOR IN CHIEF





HOLD IT, MERKLYN! YOU'VE GIVEN POWERS TO THE KNIGHTS AND LORDS WITH STAFFS-- WHAT ABOUT THOSE OF US WITHOUT STAFFS?

I HATE TO AGREE WITH REEKON, BUT HE'S RIGHT. WHAT POWERS WILL WE HAVE?



YOU WILL DISCOVER YOUR POWERS SOON ENOUGH, ALL OF YOU.

ONLY YOU CAN DECIDE WHETHER TO USE THOSE POWERS FOR GOOD OR ILL.



THE CHOICE IS YOURS...

MERKLYN'S IMAGE IS FADING AWAY!

MYSTIC POWERS-- MYSTIC STAFFS-- SEEMS FANTASTIC!



FANTASTIC OR NOT, WITTERQUICK--YOU'VE GOT A MYSTIC STAFF, AND I DON'T!

BUT WE'LL SOON FIX THAT!

UH-UH, REEKON--



--CAN'T LET YOU HAVE IT!

CALL ME *IMPULSIVE*, BUT I'VE A FEELING I'LL NEED MY STAFF TO HELP REBUILD THE WORLD!

MOVING SO FAST-- I CAN'T HOLD--



MY LORD DARKSTORM, WILL THANK ME FOR TAKING YOU APART, CRYOTEK--AND I PROBABLY WON'T EVEN WORK UP MUCH OF AN APPETITE!

NO WONDER YOU *EAT* SO MUCH, CINDARR!

YOU'VE GOT SUCH A BIG MOUTH.



BACK FOR MORE, EH, REEKON? GLAD TO ACCOMMODATE.

THE REST OF YOU--DON'T JUST STAND THERE!

LEORIC'S MEN ARE OUR ENEMIES!

IN THE NAME OF OUR LEADER, DARKSTORM-- CRUSH THEM! TAKE THEIR STAFFS!



WITH A WILD CRY, THE TWO GROUPS OF KNIGHTLY WARRIORS ATTACK, THROWING THEMSELVES MAN AGAINST MAN IN A COMBAT MADE ALL THE MORE FEROCIOUS BY ITS SHEER SENSELESSNESS.

SUCH IS THE MADNESS THAT HAS CONSUMED THE ONCE-PEACEFUL PLANET OF PRYSMOS IN THE DAYS SINCE THE AGE OF SCIENCE ENDED, AND THE AGE OF MAGIC RETURNED...

LIKE THE TECHNOLOGY THAT NOW LIES IN SCATTERED RUINS ABOUT THIS WORLD, THE ANCIENT WAYS OF LAW AND PEACE HAVE COLLAPSED AS WELL.

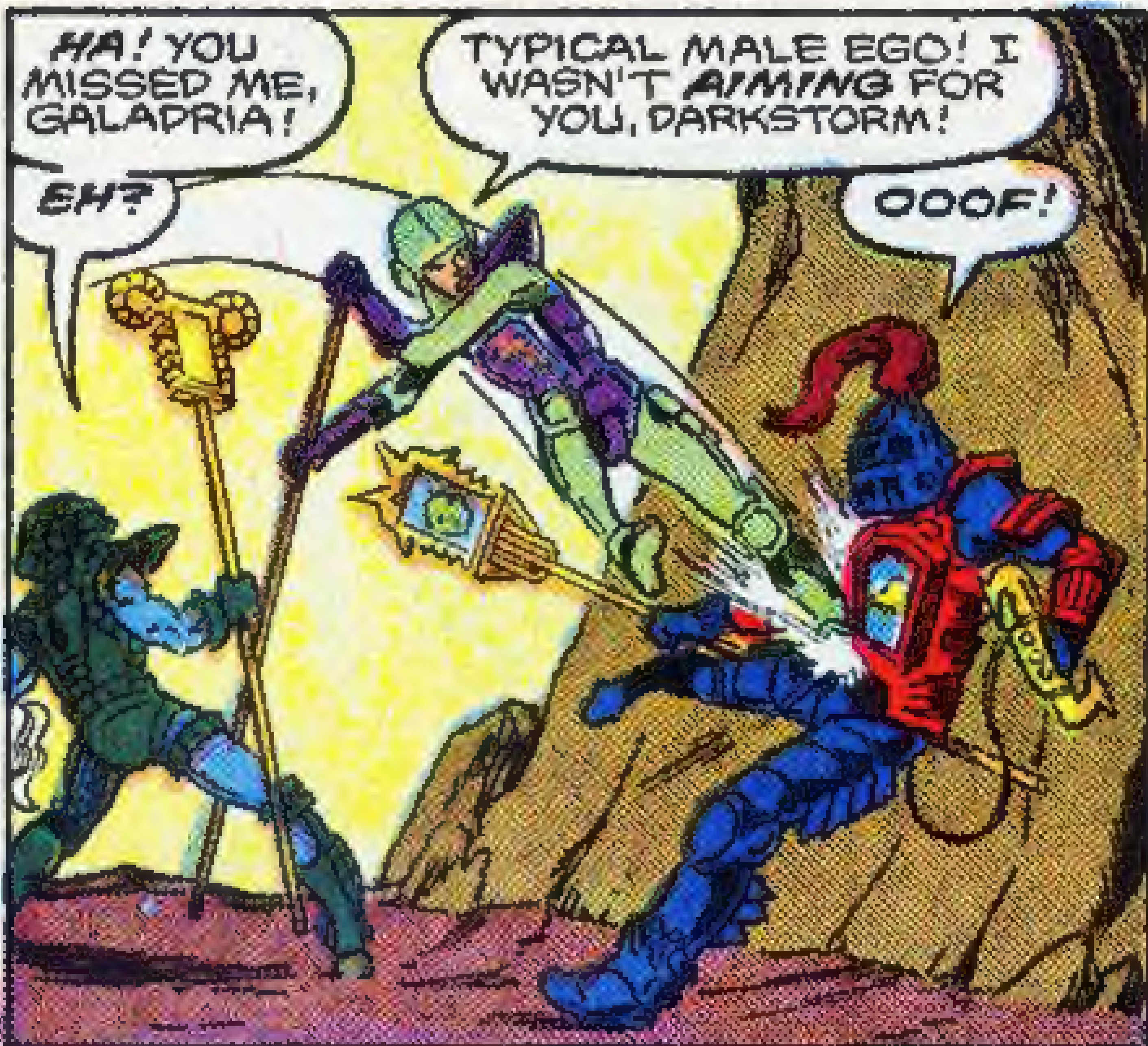
IN THIS SAVAGE NEW WORLD, IN THIS AGE OF MAGIC, THE RULES ARE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST AND MIGHT MAKES RIGHT.

WATCHING THIS SCENE, THE KNIGHT KNOWN AS LEORIC FEELS BITTERNESS WELLING IN HIS HEART.

WHAT GLORY THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN, COULD THESE KNIGHTS BUT WORK TOGETHER FOR A COMMON CAUSE...





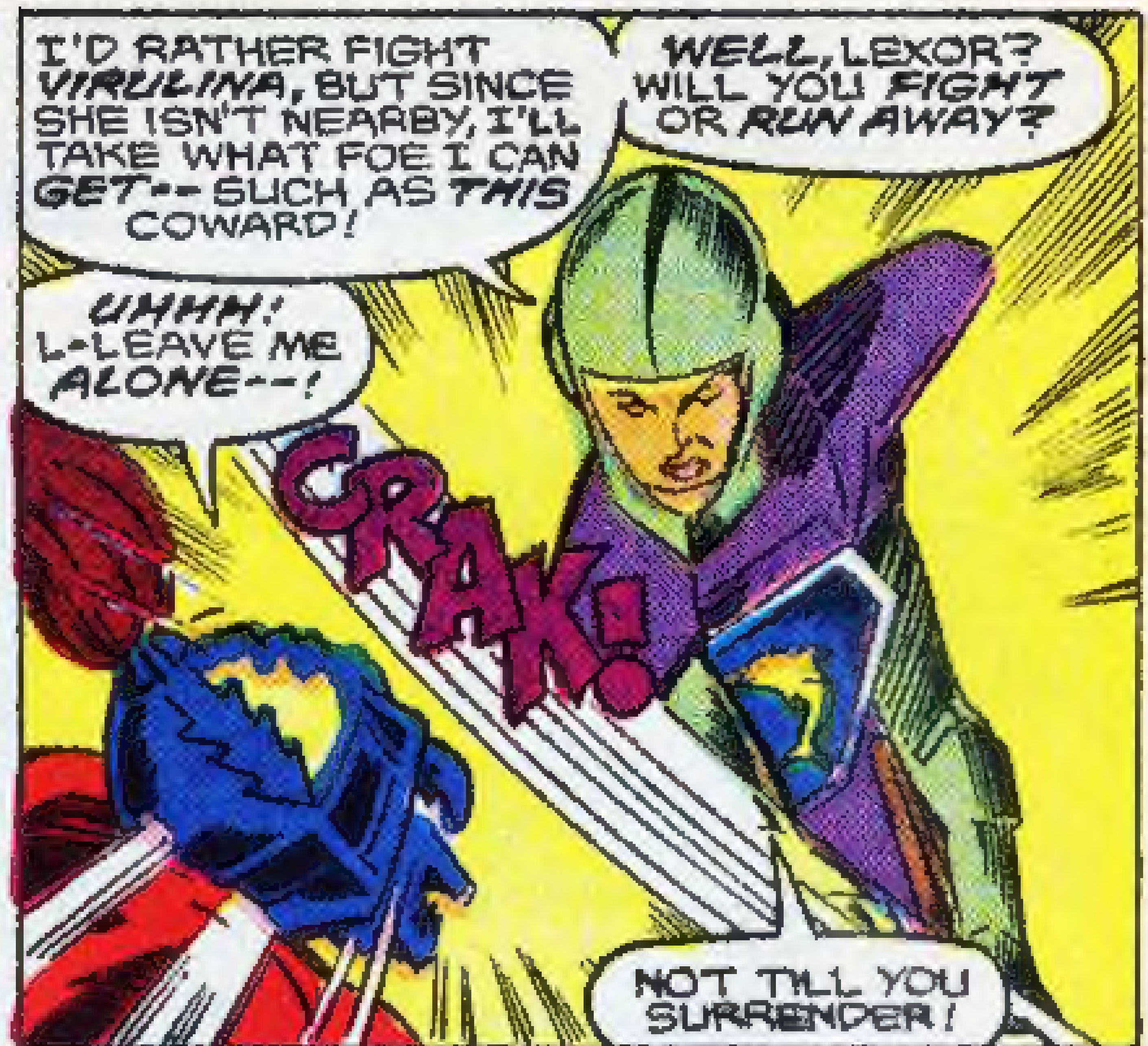


HA! YOU MISSED ME, GALADRIA!

TYPICAL MALE EGO! I WASN'T AIMING FOR YOU, DARKSTORM!

EH?

OOOF!



I'D RATHER FIGHT VIRULINA, BUT SINCE SHE ISN'T NEARBY, I'LL TAKE WHAT FOE I CAN GET-- SUCH AS THIS COWARD!

WELL, LEXOR? WILL YOU FIGHT OR RUN AWAY?

UHHH! L-LEAVE ME ALONE--!

CRACK!

NOT TILL YOU SURRENDER!



N-NO! WORDS ENTERING MY MIND-- LIKE A VOICE WHISPERING IN MY EAR!

"THE ARROWS TURN, THE SWORDS REBEL--"

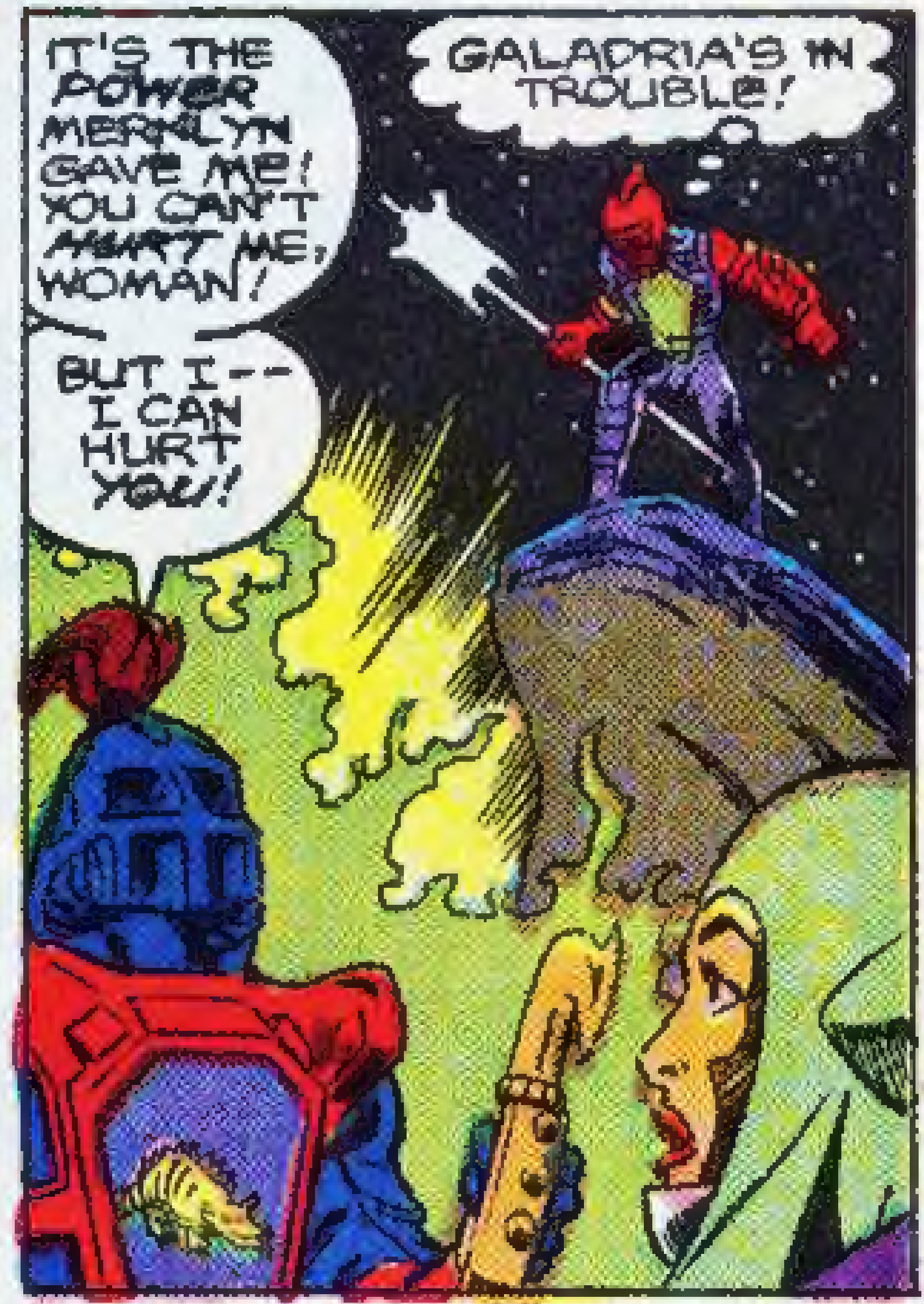


"--MAY NOTHING PIERCE THIS MORTAL SHELL!"

HA! I FEEL POWER SURGING THROUGH ME! NOTHING CAN HARM ME NOW! I'M INVULNERABLE!

WHA--?

MY STAFF SNAPPED!



IT'S THE POWER MERGLYN GAVE ME! YOU CAN'T HURT ME, WOMAN!

BUT I-- I CAN HURT YOU!

GALADRIA'S IN TROUBLE!



BETTER MOVE FAST BEFORE SHE GETS--

TWONG!

HUM? I BOUNCED!

OWW! KICKING HIM IS LIKE HITTING A STONE WALL!



NOW IT'S MY TURN TO TRY TO SMASH YOU, WITTERQUICK-- HEY! SLOW DOWN!

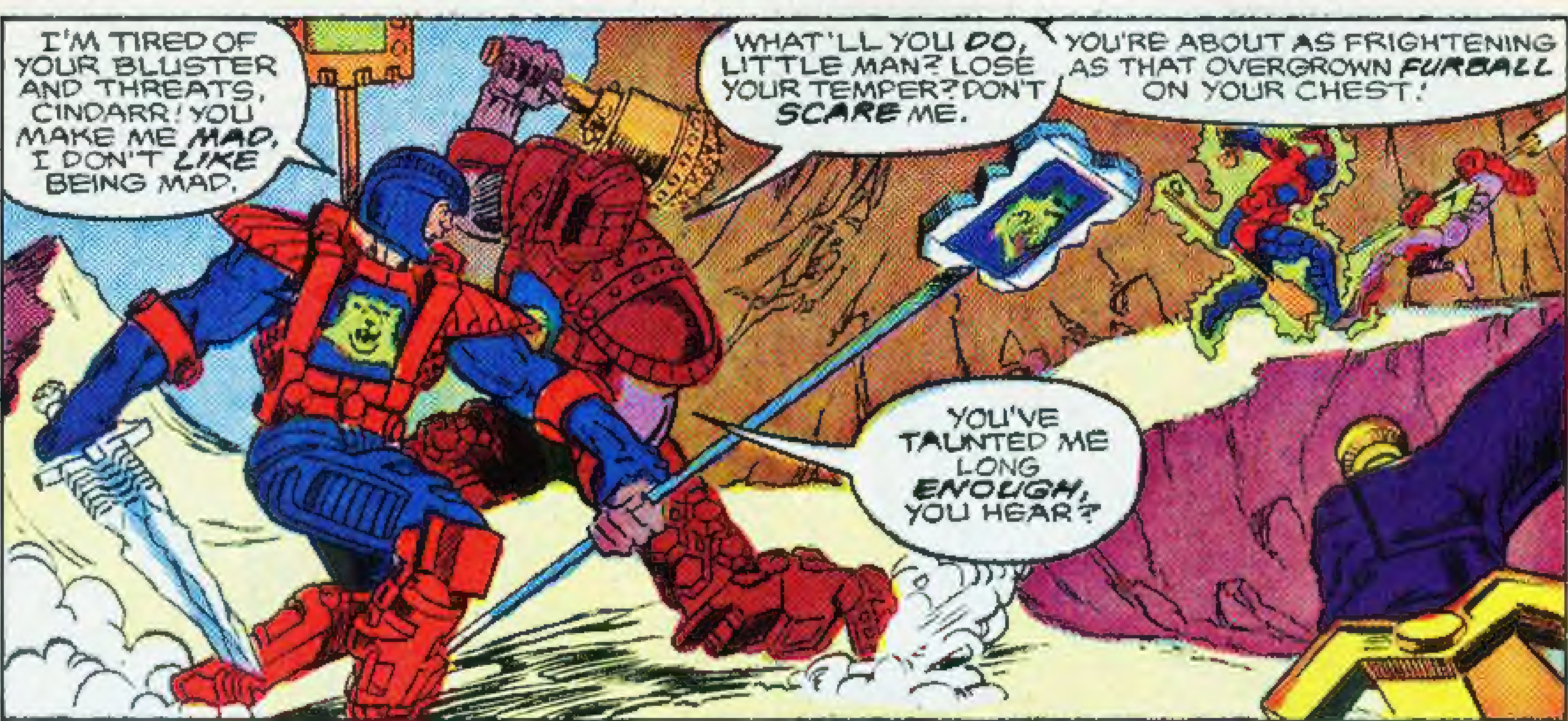
SOME KIND OF SPELL-POEM IN MY THOUGHTS...

"SHEATHE THESE FEET IN THE DRIVING GALE--"

"MAKE SWIFT THESE LEGS, O'ER LAND I SAIL!"

I NEVER SAW ANYONE MOVE SO FAST!





I'M TIRED OF YOUR BLUSTER AND THREATS, CINDARR! YOU MAKE ME MAD, I DON'T LIKE BEING MAD.

WHAT'LL YOU DO, LITTLE MAN? LOSE YOUR TEMPER? DON'T SCARE ME.

YOU'RE ABOUT AS FRIGHTENING AS THAT OVERGROWN FURBALL ON YOUR CHEST!

YOU'VE TAUNTED ME LONG ENOUGH, YOU HEAR?



ENDU-LUHAARRH!

MOONS OF PRYSMOB!



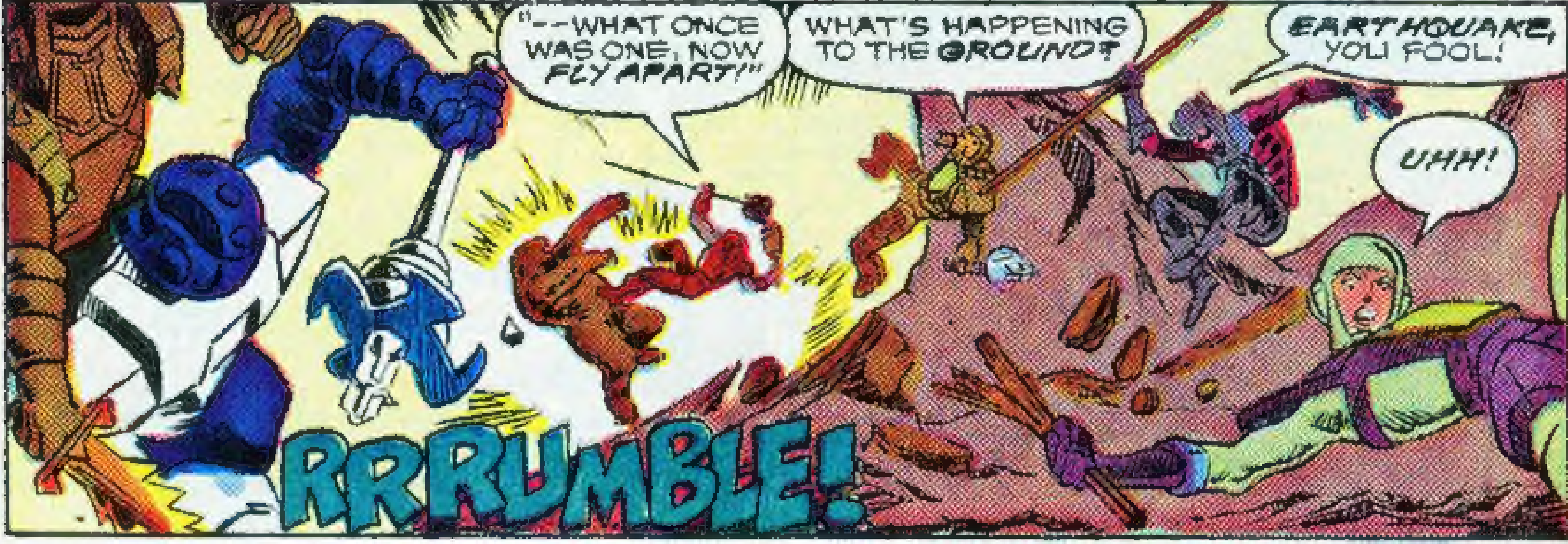
HE'S TRANSFORMED HIMSELF! THAT MUST BE MERKLYNN'S GIFT TO HIM--HIS POWER!

BUT WHAT'S MY POWER? HOW CAN I FIGHT A BEAR?

EH? WORDS IN MY MIND... IN MERKLYN'S VOICE...



"BY NATURE'S HAND, BY CRAFTS, BY ART--



--WHAT ONCE WAS ONE, NOW FLY APART!"

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE GROUND?

EARTHOVAKE, YOU FOOL!

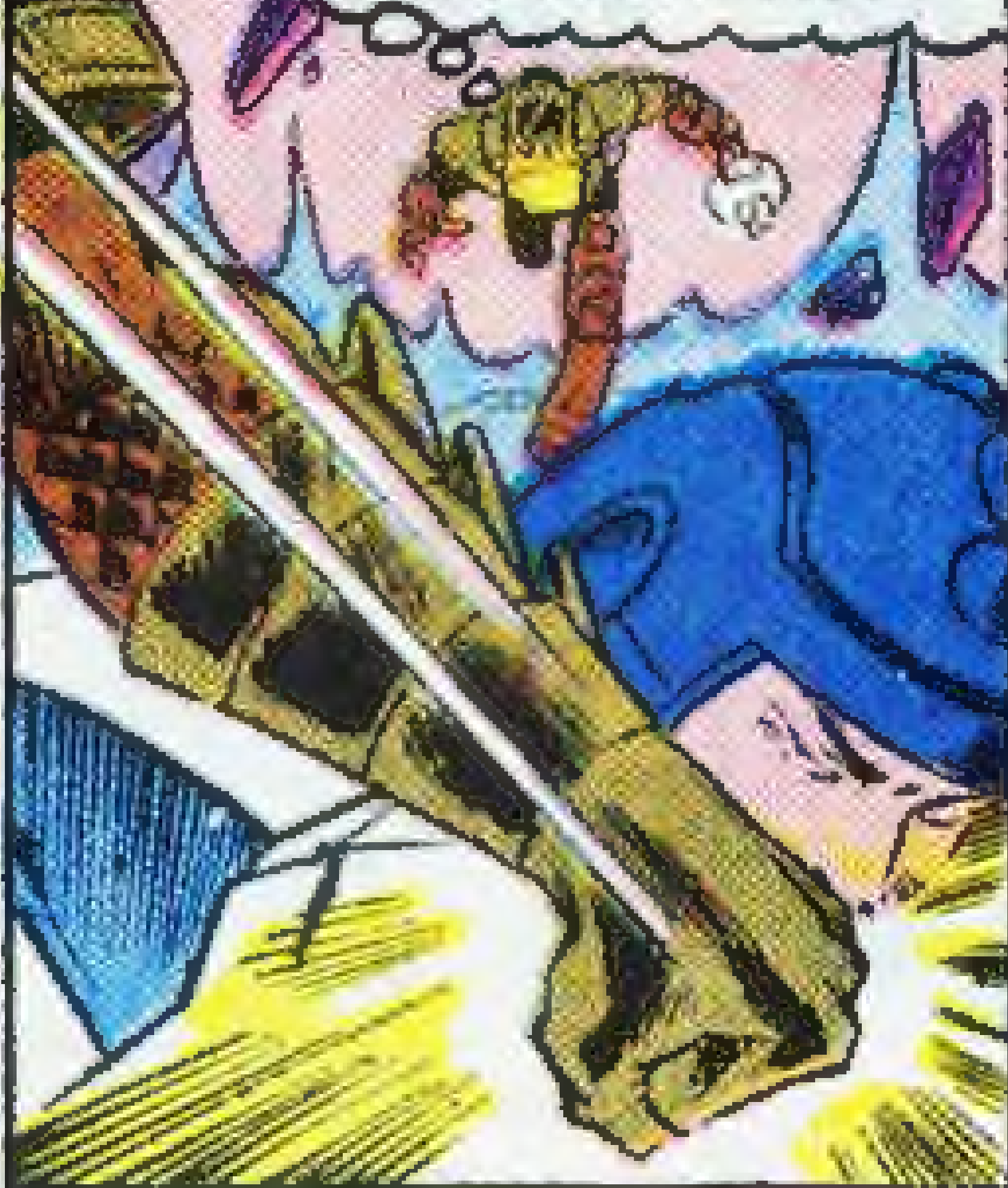
UHH!

RRRUMBLE!

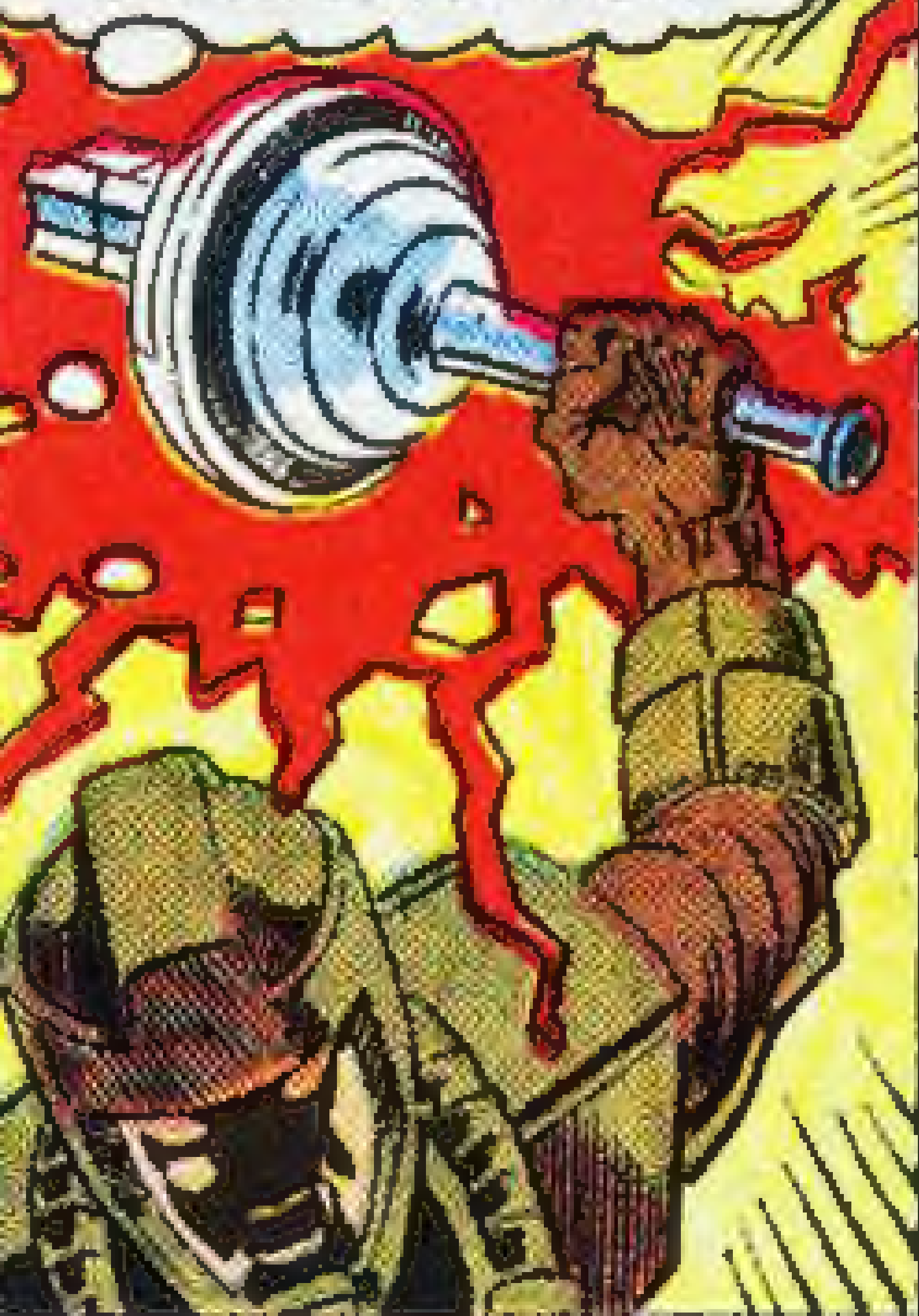


MAKING THE EARTH MOVE MUST BE CINDARR'S POWER!

UH-OH! I THOUGHT I SMELLED TROUBLE! REEKON CAUGHT ECTAR OFF GUARD DURING THE SHAKEUP! HE NEEDS HELP!



I MAY NOT HAVE A STAFF-- I MAY NOT KNOW WHAT MY POWER IS-- BUT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A FIGHTER--



--AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO STOP FIGHTING NOW!

**WHAM!**



YOU ALL RIGHT, OLD-TIMER?

I MAY HAVE A FEW YEARS ON YOU, FERYL, BUT I'M NOT OLD-- JUST EXPERIENCED.

I'D LIKE TO SHARE SOME OF THAT EXPERIENCE WITH REEKON HERE...

ANY TIME YOU'RE READY, ECTAR!



STOP YOUR FIGHTING, ALL OF YOU!

ARE YOU WARRIORS OR MADMEN? THINK OF THE POWER WE NOW POSSESS-- AND LOOK HOW YOU'RE USING IT!



FIGHTING AMONG OURSELVES-- LIKE CHILDREN IN A SCHOOLYARD!

WE HAVE A WORLD TO REBUILD! IS THIS ANY WAY TO BEGIN?



WHAT'S WRONG, LEORIC? AFRAID YOUR KNIGHTS MIGHT LOSE IF WE FOUGHT A BATTLE TO THE FINISH?

THAT'S NOT WHAT HE SAID, CRAVEX!

NOT EVERYONE WHO WANTS PEACE IS AFRAID!

MOST ARE.

OH, SHUT UP.



WHEN THE AGE OF SCIENCE ENDED, THE WORLD AS WE KNEW IT ENDED AS WELL. NOW WE LIVE IN AN AGE OF MAGIC, A TIME OF WONDER... THE DAWN OF A *NEW BEGINNING*.

WITH OUR POWERS, AS WE COME TO *UNDERSTAND* THEM, WE CAN BRING *HOPE* TO THE HOPELESS. WE CAN RESTORE *JUSTICE* TO THE LAND.

BUT FIRST WE MUST STOP FIGHTING AMONG OURSELVES.

I AGREE.

DARKSTORM...?

LET'S SAVE OUR STRENGTH FOR THE *COMING STRUGGLE* AND LEARN WHAT POWERS WE EACH POSSESS.

LET LEORIC PLAN PEACE IF IT MAKES HIM HAPPY.

I WILL PLAN FOR WAR.

REEKON, MORTDRED, CINDARR, CRAVEX AND LEXOR-- YOU'VE ALL SWORN ALLEGIANCE TO MY STAFF. WHO ELSE WILL JOIN THE *DARKLING LORDS*?

I'LL STAND WITH YOU, DARKSTORM. I'VE NO PATIENCE FOR *WEAKNESS*, AND LEORIC'S MEWLING PLEAS FOR PEACE MAKE MY STOMACH TURN.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT *POWER* I POSSESS, BUT WHEN I DO... I WANT TO USE IT TO *CRUSH*, NOT *CREATE*.

GLAD TO HAVE YOU, VIRULINA, ANY OTHERS?

NO?

VERY WELL, THEN. WHEN NEXT WE MEET, MAY IT BE ON THE FIELD OF *BATTLE*!

A VIOLENT, *ANGRY* MAN, THAT ONE.

HE'LL MAKE A MOST *DANGEROUS* ENEMY.



NOT LONG AFTER, AT LEORIC'S STRONGHOLD IN THE CITY OF NEW VALARAK, AMID THE RUINS OF A ONCE-MIGHTY TECHNOLOGY...

IT'S SO FRUSTRATING-- KNOWING YOU HAVE A POWER BUT NOT KNOWING WHAT IT IS. WITHOUT A STAFF, I FEEL ALMOST-- **HELPLESS**.

I UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS, GALADRIA...

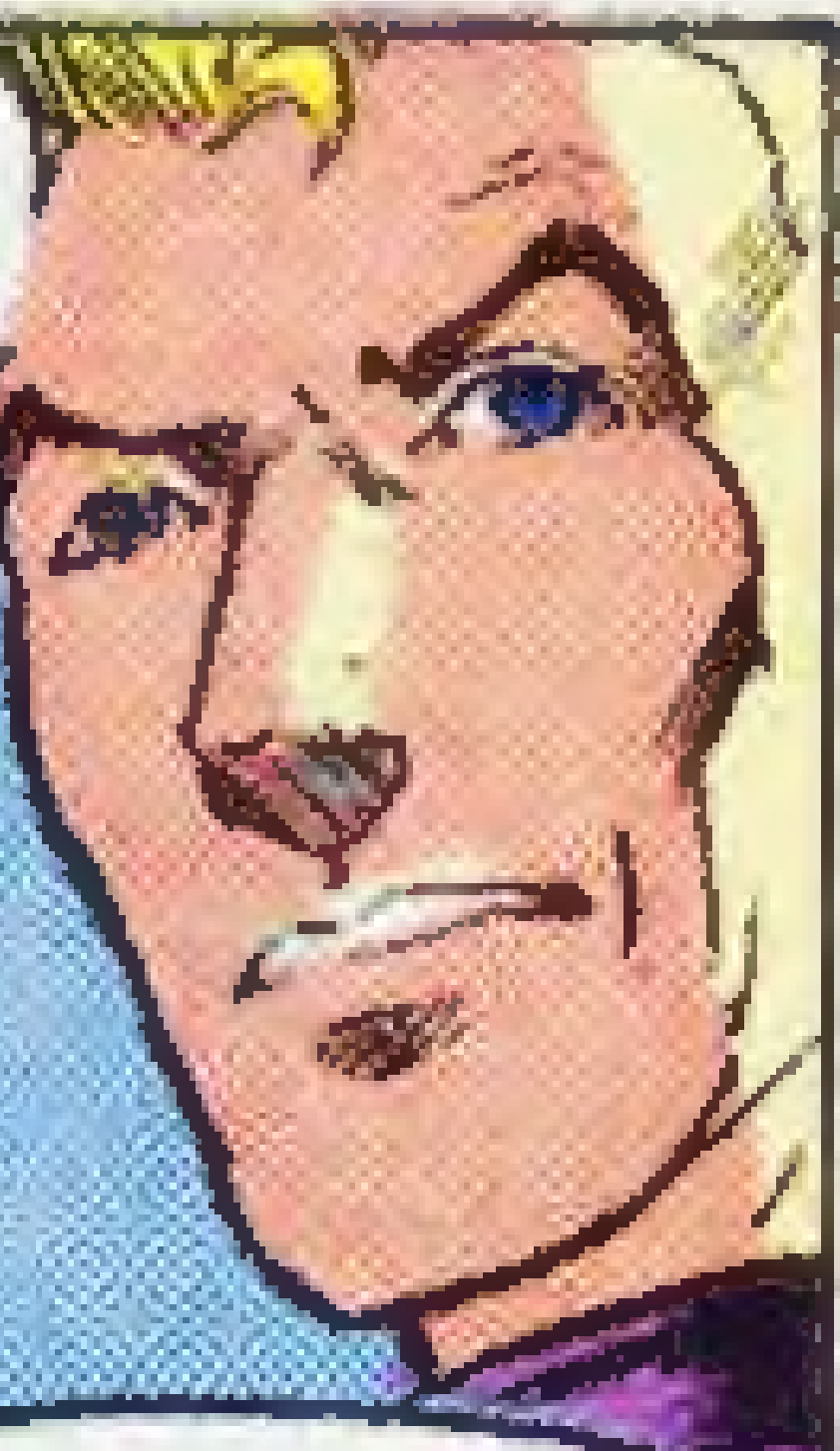


...AND UNTIL WE COMPREHEND THE FULL NATURE OF THE MAGICAL POWERS MERKLYN GAVE US, I SUGGEST WE STAY HERE IN NEW VALARAK, TO STUDY AND TRAIN **TOGETHER**.

IN TIME, THOSE OF YOU WITHOUT STAFFS-- GALADRIA, FERYL AND ECTAR-- WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE YOUR MAGIC GIFTS REVEALED.

TIME IS SOMETHING WE HAVE IN **SHORT SUPPLY**, LEORIC.

WITTERQUICK'S RIGHT. WHY WAIT FOR DARKSTORM TO STRIKE?



I SAY WE SHOULD ATTACK **FIRST**, WITH OR WITHOUT POWERS.



BOY FERYL'S GOT A POINT. BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE.

MAGIC OR NO MAGIC, I WANT TO FACE **REEKON** AGAIN... ONE ON ONE.



DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY BY YOUR **ANGER**, ECTAR.

REMEMBER WHAT MERKLYN SAID-- WE'RE SUPPOSED TO USE OUR MAGIC TO **REBUILD** THE WORLD, NOT FIGHT A WAR.

MAYBE WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT THE WAR **FIRST**, ARZON.

**WHAT-EVER** HAPPENS, I AGREE WITH LEORIC--WE MUST STAND TOGETHER!



THEN LET US TAKE AN **OATH**-- TO STAND AS ONE, TO STRIVE AS ONE, UNTIL OUR DESTINED WORK IS DONE!

LET THOSE WHO AGREE SAY **AYE!**

AYE! AYE! AYE! AYE! AYE! AYE!



ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY, IN THE DARK DOMAIN OF THE LORD KNOWN AS DARKSTORM...

I RESENT THE IMPLICATION THAT SOMEHOW THE THREE OF US ARE **LESS** THAN THE REST OF YOU-- JUST BECAUSE **YOU** HAVE STAFFS AND WE **DON'T**.

**MORTDRED**, MAY BE USELESS, BUT I'M A **SPY** OF THE FIRST ORDER WITH OR WITHOUT A STAFF!

**EHT** REEKON, HOW **DARE** YOU--

BE QUIET, MORTDRED, AND DON'T ARGUE. WE ALL **KNOW** YOU'RE A SPINELESS WORM.

REEKON SPEAKS FOR **ME** AS WELL. EVEN WITHOUT A STAFF, I'M MORE THAN A MATCH FOR **ANY** MAN!

THANK YOU, VIRULINA. NOW AS I WAS SAYING--

--OUR **FIRST** PRIORITY SHOULD BE FINDING STAFFS FOR VIRULINA, MORTDRED AND MYSELF.

**SILENCE**, REEKON.

I AM LEADER HERE.

I WILL DECIDE OUR PRIORITIES.

THEN **DECIDE**. TELL US WHEN TO ATTACK.

WHEN I'M **READY**--

AND I WILL NOT BE READY UNTIL I

KNOW THE NATURE OF LEORIC'S DEFENSES...AND WHATEVER **PLANS** HE MAY BE HATCHING IN THAT CITADEL OF HIS.

THE **BALANCE** OF POWER BETWEEN LEORIC AND ME IS TOO **EVEN**. I NEED A **SECRET** WEAPON.

**REEKON**... YOU CALL YOURSELF A MASTER SPY. YOU HAVE NO STAFF, AND WITHOUT A STAFF-- YOU MAY WELL BE **WORTHLESS** TO ME.

PROVE YOURSELF, FIND ME A WEAPON.

THEN, WITH A NEW WEAPON IN HAND, I WILL **CRUSH** LEORIC'S CITADEL... GRIND THE STONES BENEATH MY FEET... AND MARCH OVER HIS BONES TO **VICTORY**!



ONCE THIS WAS A FLOURISHING COMMUNITY, A HUB OF COMMERCE DURING THE DAYS OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY; NOW IT IS LITTLE MORE THAN A SLUM IN THE SHADOW OF DARKSTORM'S CASTLE, AND THE AIR IS THICK WITH DESPERATION.

BUT FOR REEKON AND MORTORED, WHO THRIVE ON THE DESPAIR OF OTHERS, THE AIR IS SWEETER THAN THE MOST PIQUANT PERFUME.

I TELL YOU, MORTORED, IT'S HUMILIATING.

JUST BECAUSE WE HAVE NO STAFFS, DARKSTORM SENDS US ON THE LOWEST OF MISSIONS-- TO GET HIS ARMOR CLEANED BY SOME THIRD-RATE BLACKSMITH.

I THINK IT'S A PRIVILEGE, REEKON.

WHAT?

ANY MISSION FOR MY LORD DARKSTORM IS AN HONOR OF THE HIGHEST ORDER, AND THIS MAN HARKON IS NO SIMPLE BLACKSMITH.

BEFORE THE AGE OF MAGIC BEGAN, HE WAS A BRILLIANT ENGINEER-- A SCIENTIST.

SO WHAT?

WHAT GOOD IS A SCIENTIST IN A WORLD OF MAGIC? ABOUT AS MUCH USE AS AN EXTRA NOSE.

IT'S A NEW AGE, MORTORED, AND THE OLD SKILLS DON'T MUCH MATTER ANY MORE. JUDGE A MAN BY HIS STRENGTH, NOT HIS BRAINS, THAT'S WHAT I SAY...

BRILLIANT OR NOT, HE'S JUST ANOTHER BLACKSMITH NOW.

EH? WHAT IS THIS PLACE...?

HARKON'S BLACKSMITH SHOP, REEKON.



KEEP PUMPING THOSE **BELLOWS**, FOOL.

IF THAT FIRE LOSES HEAT, I'LL REFUEL THE FLAMES WITH YOUR **HIDE**!

DARKSTORM WANTS HIS ARMOR REFINISHED, HARKON.

ANYTHING TO GET AWAY FROM THAT **HEAT**. NEVER SWEATED SO MUCH IN ALL MY LIFE BEFORE I STARTED SMITHING.

MAN GETS USED TO AIR CONDITIONING, GETS USED TO LIVING SOFT. GETS **WEAK**.

YOU HARDLY LOOK--WEAK, MY FRIEND.

HARKON, THIS IS REEKON. HE ADMIRES STRENGTH.

UH-HUH.

YOU WANT TO GET STRONG, FOUN **METAL** ALL DAY.

LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT HERE FEW LOOSE **CONNECTORS** SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG TO FIX

WHAT'S UNDER THIS **SHROUD**, BLACKSMITH?

THAT PIECE A **JUNK**...

SOMETHING I WAS BUILDING AS A **HOBBY** BACK BEFORE THE **MAGIC** CAME

NOT MUCH USE NOW, OF COURSE. HAVE A **LOOK**...

.. I CALL IT THE **SKY CLAW**!

MOONS OF PRYSMOS! IT'S A **FINE** BIT OF WORK, MY FRIEND!

BUT AS YOU SAY, **USELESS** NOW

USELESS AND YET... SOMETHING ABOUT IT SEEMS TO **ATTRACT** ME IN A WAY I CANNOT DESCRIBE...

DARKSTORM WANTS US TO FIND HIM A **SECRET WEAPON**, REEKON. WOULDN'T IT BE SPLENDID IF WE COULD RETURN TO HIM WITH SOMETHING LIKE THIS **SKY CLAW**?



SPLENDID PERHAPS. BUT A **FANTASY**. SINCE MAGIC RETURNED TO THE WORLD, NOTHING ELECTRICAL WORKS

HARKON IS RIGHT. **LOVELY** AS THIS IS, IT'S NOTHING BUT A PIECE OF--

-- JUNK?

HARKON, WHAT'S HAPPENING?

HUH?

MAN, HOW'D YOU DO THAT? THE SHIP'S LIT UP LIKE A HOLIDAY BUSH--AND THE ENGINE'S PURRIN' LOUD AS A WELL-FED CAT!

ALL I DID WAS **TOUCH** IT IT FELT AS IF MY HAND WERE ON FIRE SOMEHOW, AND THE FIRE PASSED FROM ME INTO THE SHIP..

FANTASTIC! I HAVEN'T HEARD THE HUM OF SERVOS AND TURBINES IN YEARS!

AND ALL YOU DID WAS--

-- TOUCH IT?

**STARS!**

MORTDRED, LOOK! THE SYMBOL FROM YOUR CHEST PLATE-- IT'S **TRANSFERRED** TO THE WINGS OF THIS SHIP!

AND LISTEN-- THOUGH NEITHER OF US IS TOUCHING IT, THE CRAFT IS STILL HUMMING WITH LIFE!

REEKON, COULD THIS BE OUR POWER?

THE OTHERS HAVE **STAFFS**... AND WE HAVE THIS **VEHICLE**

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO **FIND OUT**, MORTDRED. TAKE THE PILOT'S POSITION. THE CRAFT WEARS YOUR SYMBOL AFTER ALL.

THOUGH WHY A WORM LIKE YOU SHOULD HAVE SUCH FORTUNE, I'LL NEVER KNOW.

SEAT BELTS, BETTER BUCKLE IN, REEKON, BECAUSE HERE WE--



-- GGGG00000! I JUST THOUGHT OF FLYING, AND WE FLY!

WHOOOSH!

THEN THINK OF LANDING, YOU FOOL! BEFORE YOU KILL US BOTH!

REEKON, YOU CAN'T IMAGINE THE POWER I FEEL! THE CRAFT RESPONDS TO MY EVERY THOUGHT MY EVERY WHIM!

I THINK LEFT, WE BANK LEFT! I WISH FOR RIGHT, WE BANK RIGHT! UP, DOWN, FAST, SLOW--

-- THE POWER IS INCREDIBLE!

NO MORE INCREDIBLE THAN THAT IT SHOULD BE IN THE HANDS OF A ROOT-LICKING LACKEY LIKE YOU, MORTDRED!

A FINE WEAPON. INDEED MORTDRED, DARKSTORM WILL BE PLEASED

HARKON, CAN YOU BUILD MORE OF THESE MACHINES?

NOT LIKE THAT, BUT I'VE GOT ANOTHER VEHICLE HALF-FINISHED IN A WAREHOUSE NOT FAR FROM HERE.

A COUPLE OF WEEKS WITH ENOUGH MEN AND SUPPLIES, AND I CAN HAVE THAT ONE READY, TOO-- FOR A PRICE.

SWOOSH!

THE PRICE WILL BE YOUR FREEDOM, MY MUSCULAR FRIEND. ONCE DARKSTORM SEES THIS MACHINE, HE'LL WANT YOU KEPT UNDER CLOSE OBSERVATION.

FIRST I WANT TO TRY THIS BABY MYSELF...

BY ALL MEANS, BLACK-SMITH, TRY IT

HEY, NOTHING'S HAPPENING... IT'S JUST SITTING HERE.

THEN IT'S TRUE, ONLY WE HAVE THE POWER-- MERKLYN'S GIFT!

YOU MEAN I CAN'T FLY?

THAT ISN'T FAIR.



IT ISN'T  
FAIR!

WHO SAID  
LIFE WAS  
FAIR YOU  
FOOL?

HAHAHAHA!

**MCWHATEVER LATER AT  
DARKSTORM'S CASTLE.**

I NEED INFORMATION,  
CRAVEX-- I NEED TO KNOW  
WHAT LECRIC IS PLANNING.  
I NEED TO KNOW THE  
DETAILS OF HIS  
DEFENSES.

A TRICKY  
SITUATION,  
MY LORD

SEND A SPY TO LECRIC'S  
STRONGHOLD, AND YOU  
MIGHT--EH?

I DON'T BELIEVE  
IT! IT ISN'T  
POSSIBLE!

WHAT ISN'T  
POSSIBLE? OUT OF  
THE WAY CRAVEX!  
I CAN'T--

**FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, THE  
LORD MACHIN OF DARKSTORM'S CASTLE WAS  
SPEECHLESS WITH AMAZEMENT.**

**THE  
SKY CLAW WAS  
RUNG  
ACROSS THE  
CASTLE'S WALL  
LIKE A WHIPPED  
ROPE.**

AM MY LORD. WE HAD YOUR ARMOR  
REPAIRED AS YOU COMMANDED TO  
--WITH FAULT REPAIRS ONLY A FEW  
ADJUSTMENTS. NOTHING MAJOR, A  
SIMPLE PIECE OF--

MORTDRED! FORGET  
MY ARMOR AND TELL ME  
HOW YOU COME TO BE  
FLYING IN SUCH A  
CRAFT!

AND BE  
QUICK,  
BEFORE I  
HAVE YOUR  
HEAD  
BRONCED!

WHAT,  
THIS  
LITTLE  
THING?

**A FEW MORE WORDS  
OF EXPLANATION, AND**

OUT OF THAT CRAFT,  
BOTH OF YOU! I MUST  
TEST IT FOR MYSELF!  
IF WHAT YOU SAY  
IS TRUE--

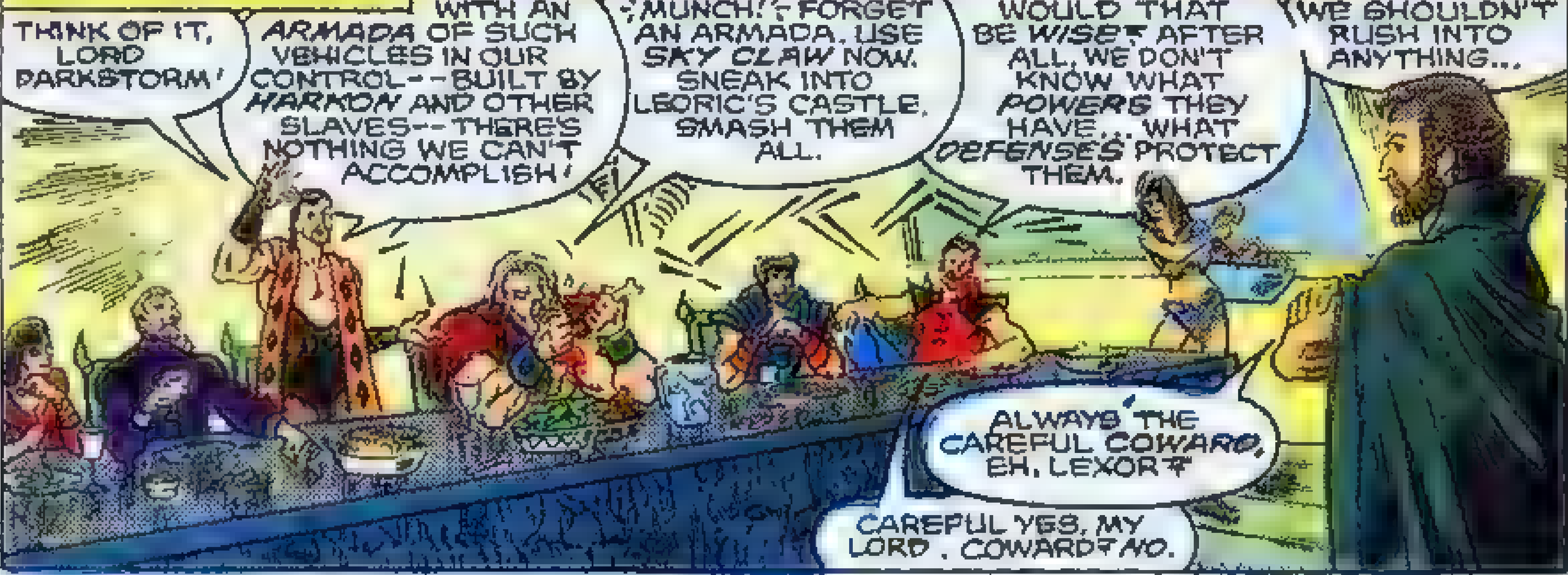
--THIS IS JUST  
THE WEAPON I  
NEED TO TIP  
THE BALANCE  
OF POWER!

**AND AS THE SKY CLAW  
RESPONDS TO DARKSTORM'S  
MENTAL COMMAND, HIS  
LAUGHTER ECHOES OVER  
HIS DARK DOMAIN**

**LIKE THE LOW  
RUMBLE OF  
DISTANT THUNDER.**



THAT NIGHT, AS THE DARKLING LORDS GATHER FOR A CELEBRATORY SUPPER IN THE CASTLE HALL, ALL THOUGHTS TURN TO THE FUTURE... AND EACH HEART THROBS WITH A CRAVING FOR POWER...



THINK OF IT, LORD DARKSTORM!

ARMADA OF SUCH VEHICLES IN OUR CONTROL--BUILT BY HARKON AND OTHER SLAVES--THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN'T ACCOMPLISH!

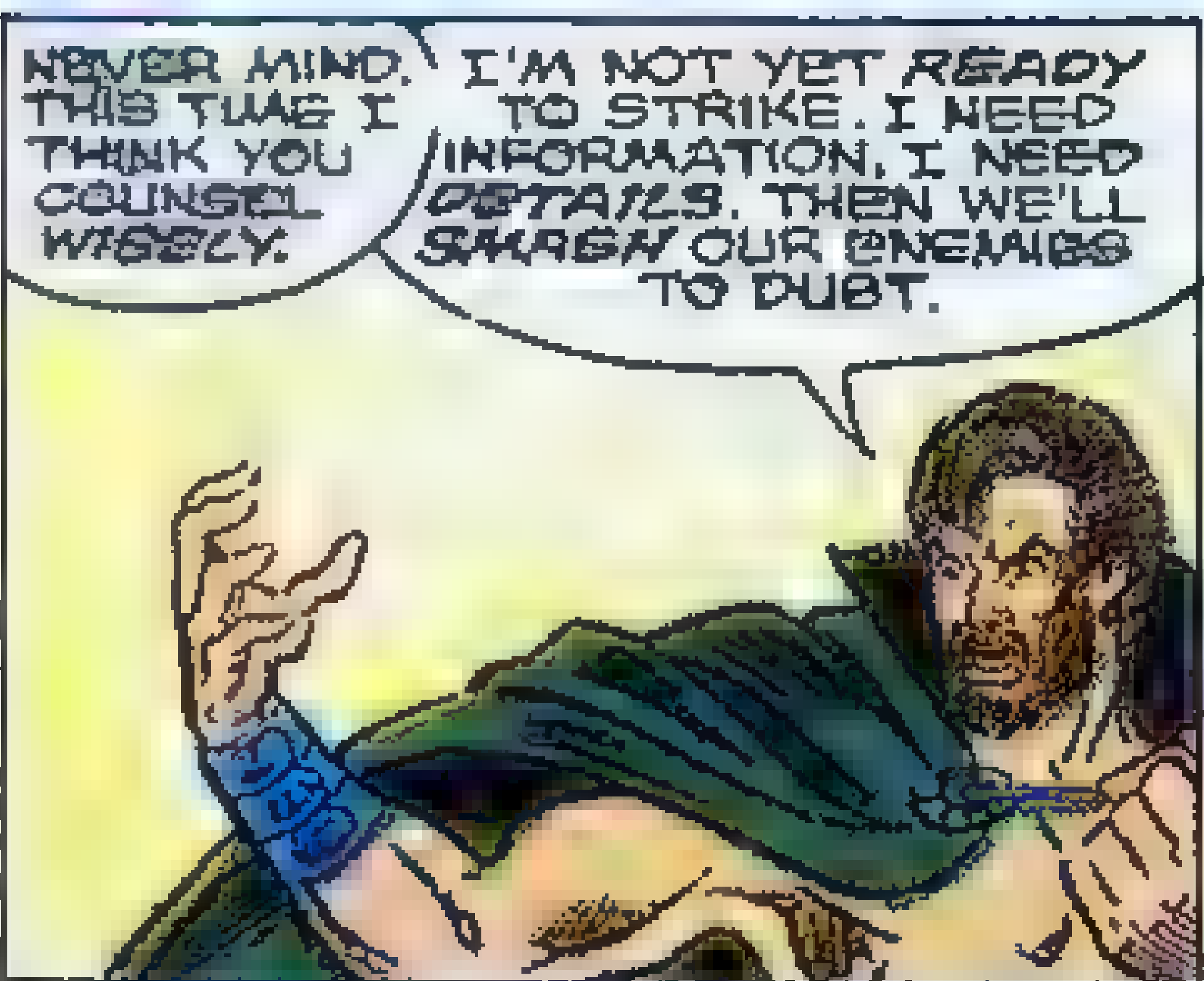
MUNCH! FORGET AN ARMADA. USE SKY CLAW NOW. SNEAK INTO LEORIC'S CASTLE. SMASH THEM ALL.

WOULD THAT BE WISE? AFTER ALL, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT POWERS THEY HAVE... WHAT DEFENSES PROTECT THEM.

WE SHOULDN'T RUSH INTO ANYTHING...

ALWAYS THE CAREFUL COWARD, EH, LEXOR?

CAREFUL YES, MY LORD. COWARD? NO.



NEVER MIND. THIS TIME I THINK YOU COUNSEL WISELY.

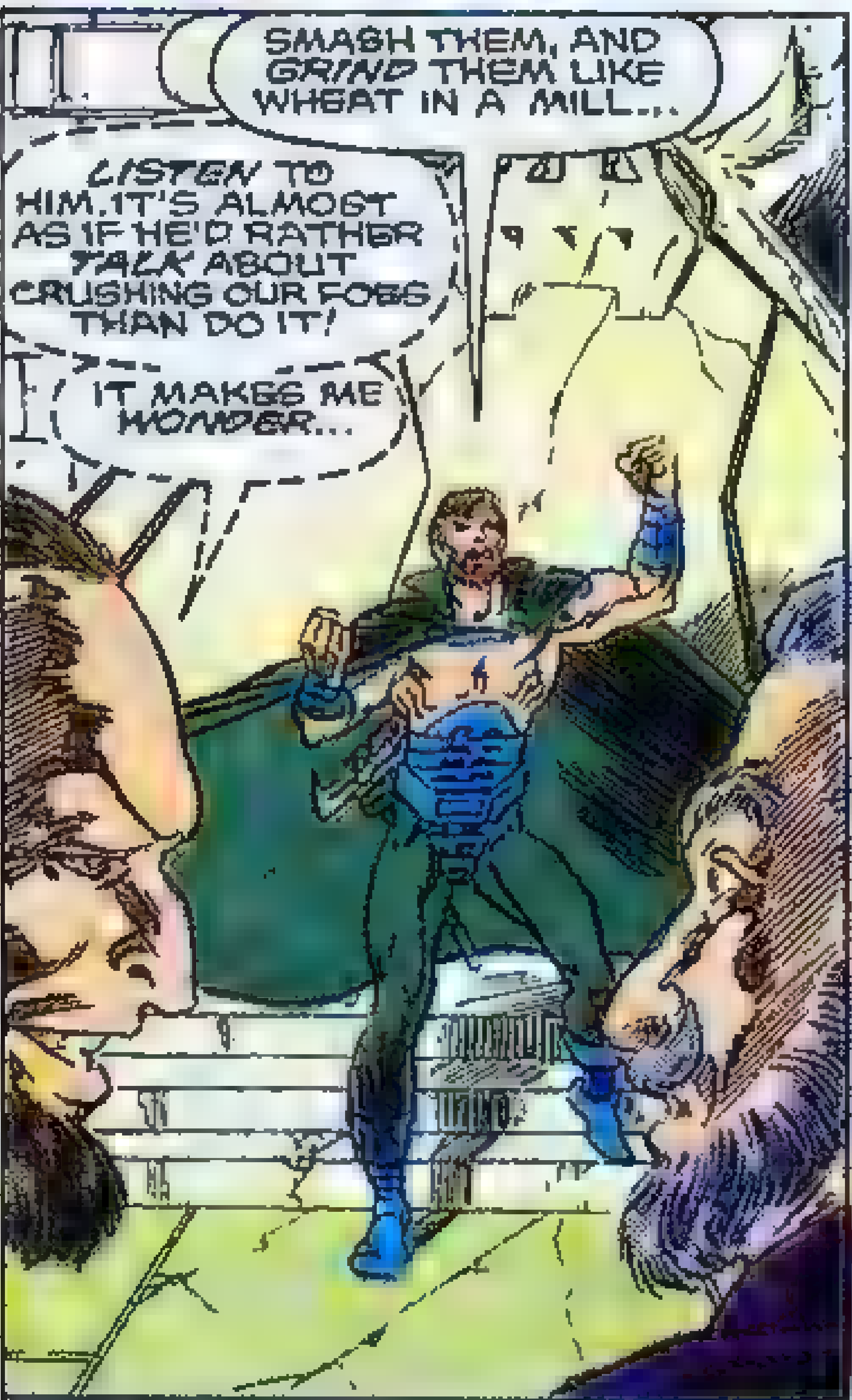
I'M NOT YET READY TO STRIKE. I NEED INFORMATION, I NEED DETAILS. THEN WE'LL SMASH OUR ENEMIES TO DUST.



LOOKS TO ME LIKE DARKSTORM'S EVEN MORE RELUCTANT TO ACT NOW THAT HE'S GOT HIS SECRET WEAPON.

HE'S RIGHT TO BE CAUTIOUS...

PERHAPS TOO CAUTIOUS...



SMASH THEM, AND GRIND THEM LIKE WHEAT IN A MILL...

LISTEN TO HIM. IT'S ALMOST AS IF HE'D RATHER TALK ABOUT CRUSHING OUR FOES THAN DO IT!

IT MAKES ME WONDER...



...PERHAPS LEXOR ISN'T THE ONLY COWARD IN OUR MIDST.



HOW DARE YOU?

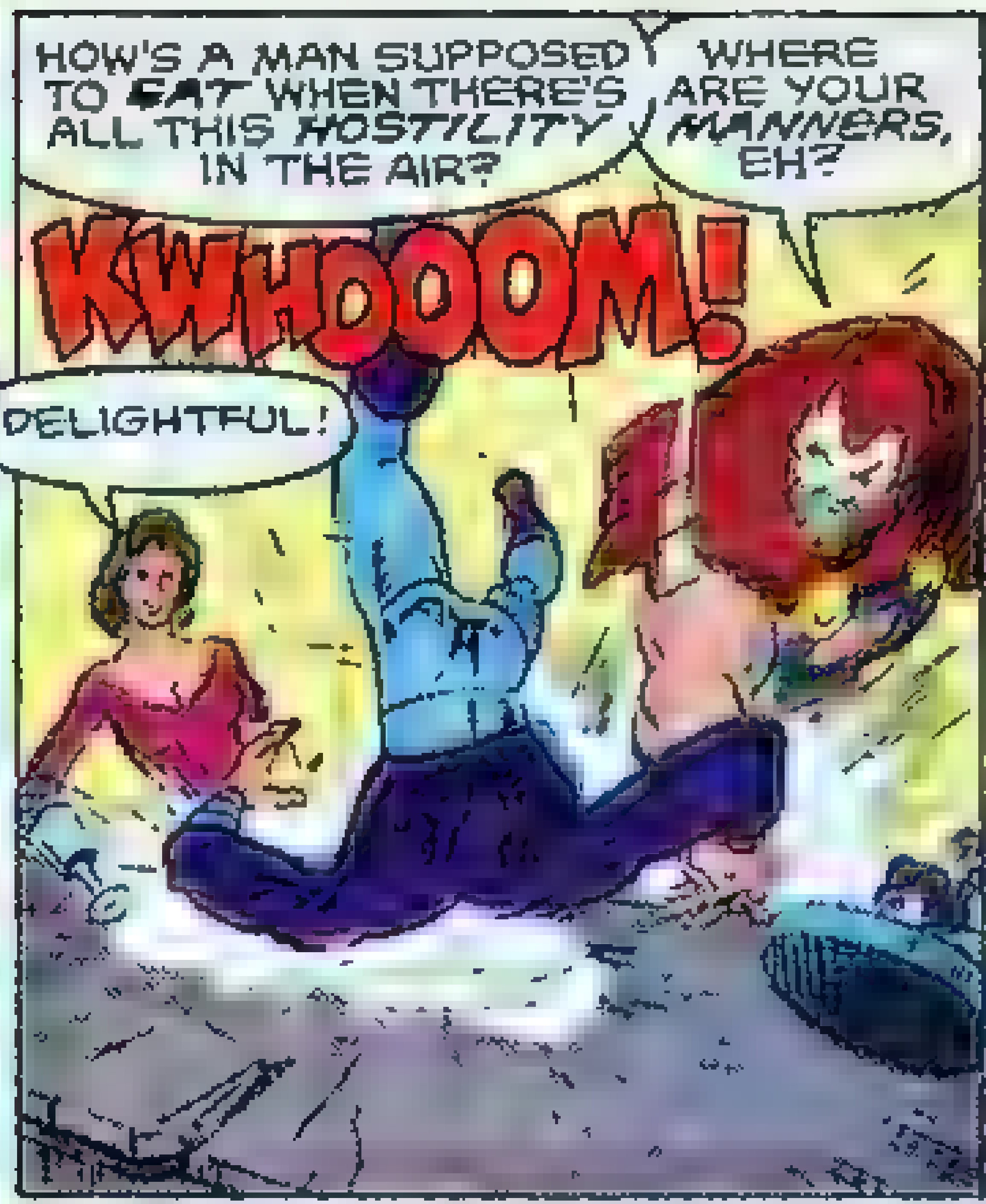
GOOD! A FIGHT! ABOUT TIME!

WHAM!

UNGGH!

MUNCH! GULP! MUMM?







BUT WHY STOP WITH SPYING?

WHY NOT SHOW DARKSTORM JUST HOW VALUABLE I CAN BE, NOW THAT I HAVE MY OWN MAGICAL POWER?

THERE'S LEORIC'S CASTLE UP AHEAD.

I'LL DO IT! SKYCLAW, ATTACK!

AND, LIKE A WILD STALLION, REARING WITH SAVAGE FURY, THE MYSTICALLY POWERED CRAFT RESPONDS, LASER CANNONS SLIDING INTO VIEW--

ZAWMM ZAWMM ZAWMM

-- FIRING A BURST OF OCCULT ENERGY THAT POUNDS LEORIC'S CASTLE LIKE A FIST OF THUNDER!

WAKE UP, SPECTRAL KNIGHTS! YOUR DOOM IS UPON YOU! HAHHAHA!

TRATTA WHOOM!

THWOOM!

WHAT--?

GUAROOM!

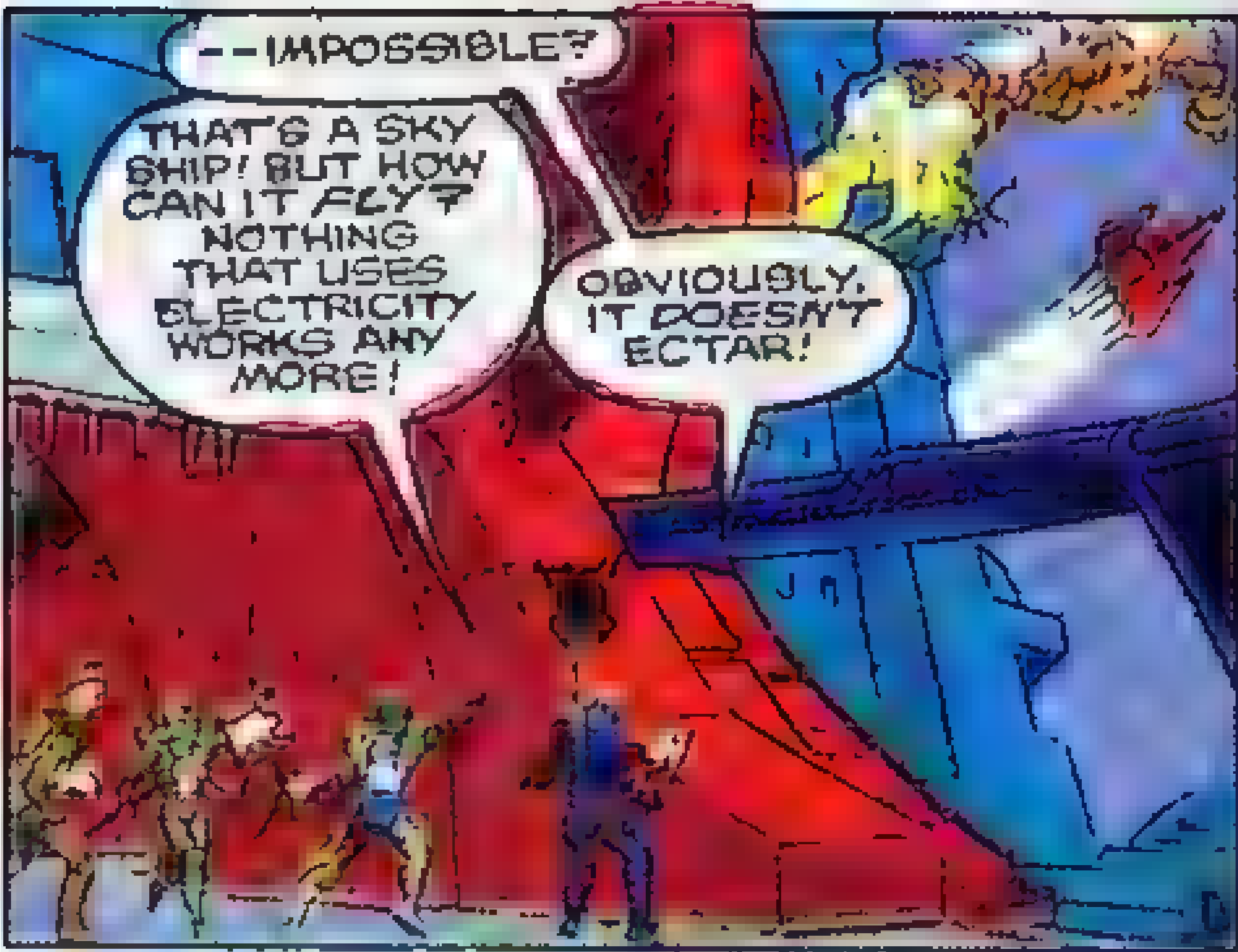
COME OUT AND PLAY, YOU KNIGHTS! I'LL SMASH YOU ALL AS THAT STATUE! HAHHAHA!

ARZON, WHAT'S HAPPENING? THE CASTLE'S SHAKING WORSE THAN A TREEHOUSE IN A HURRICANE!

IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, FERYL, I'D SAY WE WERE UNDER AIR ATTACK!

BUT WITH ALL AIRCRAFT ON PRYSMOS GROUNDED SINCE THE END OF SCIENCE, THAT'S JUST--

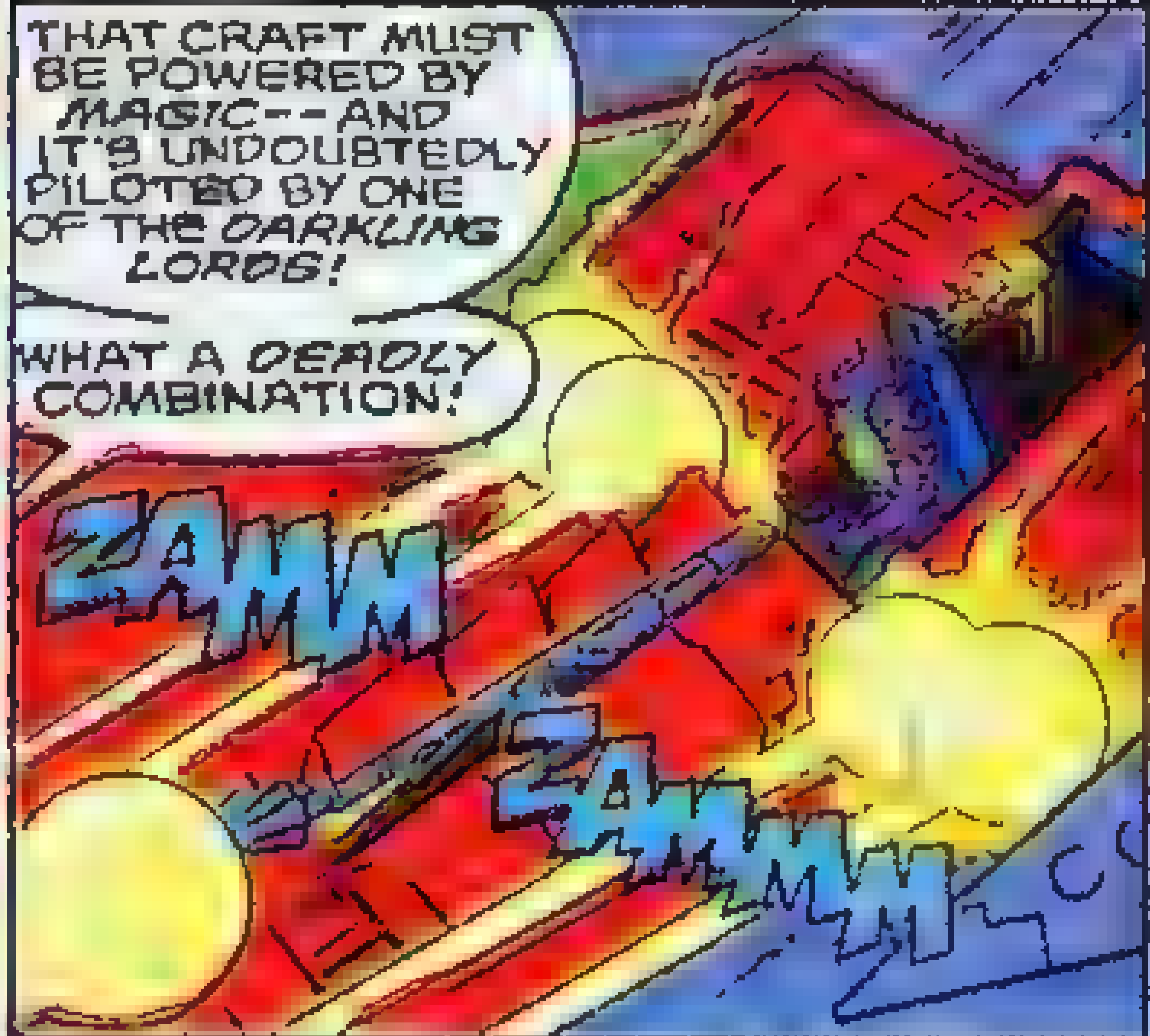




--IMPOSSIBLE?

THAT'S A SKY SHIP! BUT HOW CAN IT FLY? NOTHING THAT USES ELECTRICITY WORKS ANY MORE!

OBVIOUSLY, IT DOESN'T ECTAR!



THAT CRAFT MUST BE POWERED BY MAGIC-- AND IT'S UNDOUBTEDLY PILOTED BY ONE OF THE DARKLING LORDS!

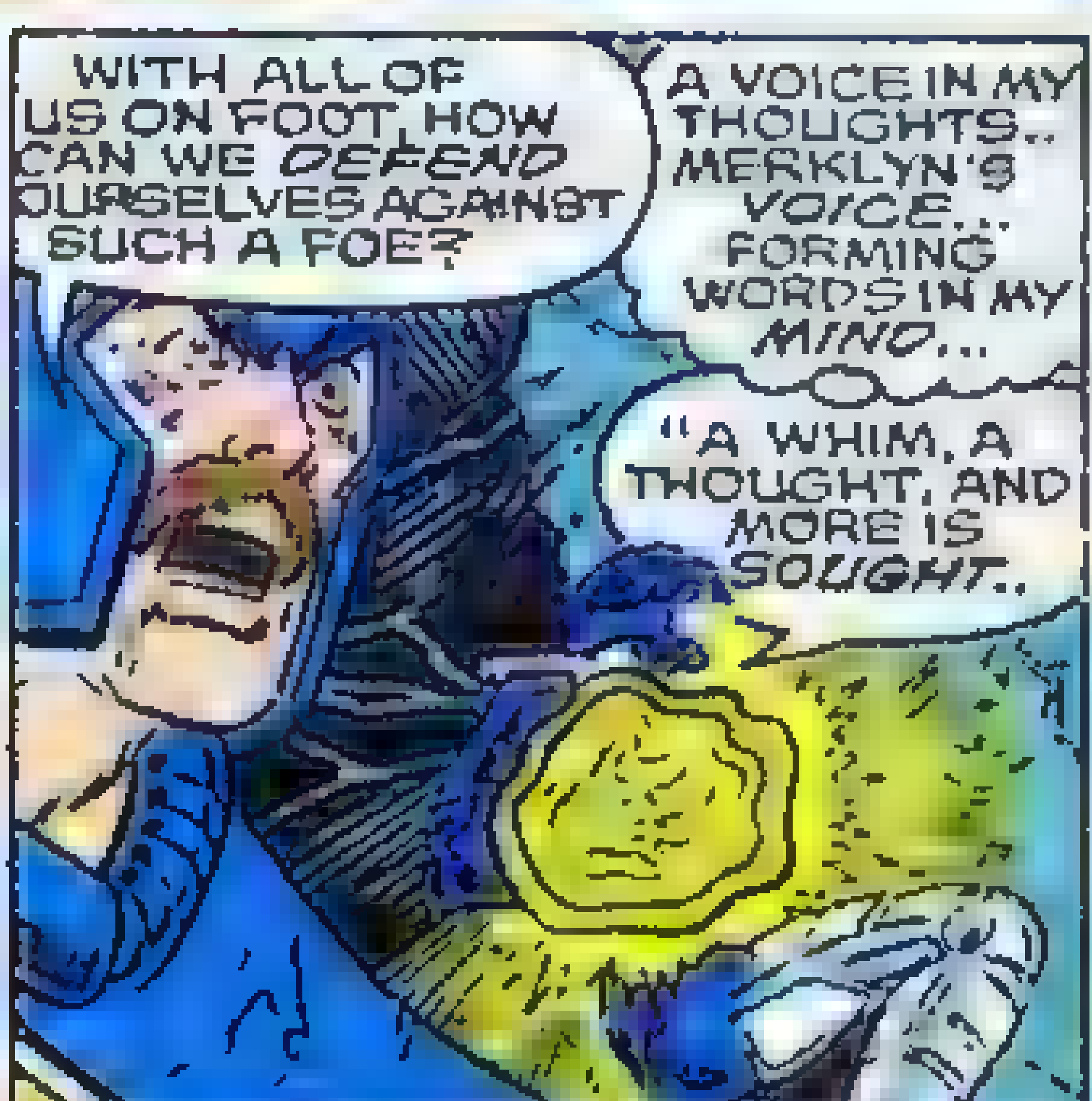
WHAT A DEADLY COMBINATION!

ZAMM

ZAMM



WHAZAMM!



WITH ALL OF US ON FOOT, HOW CAN WE DEFEND OURSELVES AGAINST SUCH A FOE?

A VOICE IN MY THOUGHTS.. MERKLYN'S VOICE.. FORMING WORDS IN MY MIND...

"A WHIM, A THOUGHT, AND MORE IS SOUGHT.."



"...AWAKE, MY MIND, THY WILL BE WROUGHT!"

GODS OF PRYSMOG! IT'S AS IF A LIGHT WERE SHINING THROUGH MY BRAIN! SUDDENLY, EVERYTHING I EVER READ, EVERYTHING I EVER KNEW-- RETURNS TO ME!

KNOWLEDGE! MERKLYN'S GIFT TO ME IS THE MAGIC POWER OF--

SHAWHOOM!







I HAD A FEELING WE'D FIND **MORTORED** HERE, DOING SOMETHING **STUPID**, WHEN REEKON FOUND THE SKY CLAW MISSING.

HE'S MADE A PERFECT **BOTCH** OF THINGS--BUT THERE'S STILL A CHANCE WE CAN SALVAGE SOMETHING FROM THIS NIGHT'S FIASCO!

**DARKLING LORDS! PICK YOUR ADVERSARY--AND DESTROY HIM!**

WITH **PLEASURE**, MY NOBLE LIEGE!

I'VE BEEN **ACHING** FOR A REMATCH WITH THESE SO-CALLED **KNIGHTS!**

**KRAK!**

**HAH!**

**UNNN!**

THE **DARKLING LORDS** CAUGHT US BY **SURPRISE**-- WITH OUR DEFENSES **DOWN**, OUR PEOPLE STILL REELING FROM THAT AIR ATTACK!

WORSE, THEY'RE **MOUNTED** AND WE'RE **AFOOT**-- GIVING THEM THE TACTICAL ADVANTAGE!

SOMEHOW I HAVE TO **EVEN** THE ODDS AGAINST US!

PERHAPS BY LAUNCHING AN "AIR ATTACK" OF MY OWN--

...AND WHAT BETTER TARGET THAN THAT CRINGING COWARD, **LEXOR?**

PERHAPS IT IS THE RUSTLE OF LEAVES THAT ALERTS THE **DARKLING LORD**--

--PERHAPS SOME OLDER, INSTINCTIVE SENSE OF SELF-PRESERVATION--

**BYE!**

--BUT WHATEVER THE REASON, ECTAR'S ATTACK ISN'T QUITE AS UNEXPECTED AS HE'D HOPED.

**FOOL! YOU CAN'T HURT ME!**

"THE ARROWS TURN, THE SWORDS **REBEL**--

"--MAY NOTHING PIERCE THIS MORTAL SHELL!"

**SKRAK**

**OWWW!**

**HAHAHAHA!**



THERE'S THE ONE  
CALLED ARZON,  
CINDARR! GET HIM!

DON'T GIVE  
ME ORDERS,  
CRAVEX!

I'LL SMASH THAT  
KNIGHT BECAUSE I  
WANT TO, NOT ON  
YOUR SAY SO--  
HUH?

CHANGING INTO  
HIS MAGICAL  
TOTEM--AN  
EAGLE--  
FLYING AWAY!  
HOW DARE HE!

AMAZING HOW THIS  
SKY CLAY REPAIRS  
ITSELF, ALMOST  
HEALING LIKE A  
THING ALIVE!

NOW I CAN  
RETURN TO THE  
BATTLE--AND  
WIN MY MASTER  
DARKSTORM'S  
GRATEFUL  
APPROVAL!

AHH! LEORIC--  
ON THAT ROCK--  
ABOUT TO  
AMBUSH LORD  
DARKSTORM!

HOW BETTER TO  
WIN MY LORD'S  
GRATITUDE THAN  
BY DESTROYING HIS  
ENEMY? LEORIC  
CAN'T SEE OR HEAR  
ME AT THIS  
DISTANCE!

I HAVE  
YOU IN MY  
SIGHTS,  
LEORIC!

YOU'RE  
MINE!

AND YOU'RE MINE,  
BACK-STABBER!

ARRRHH!

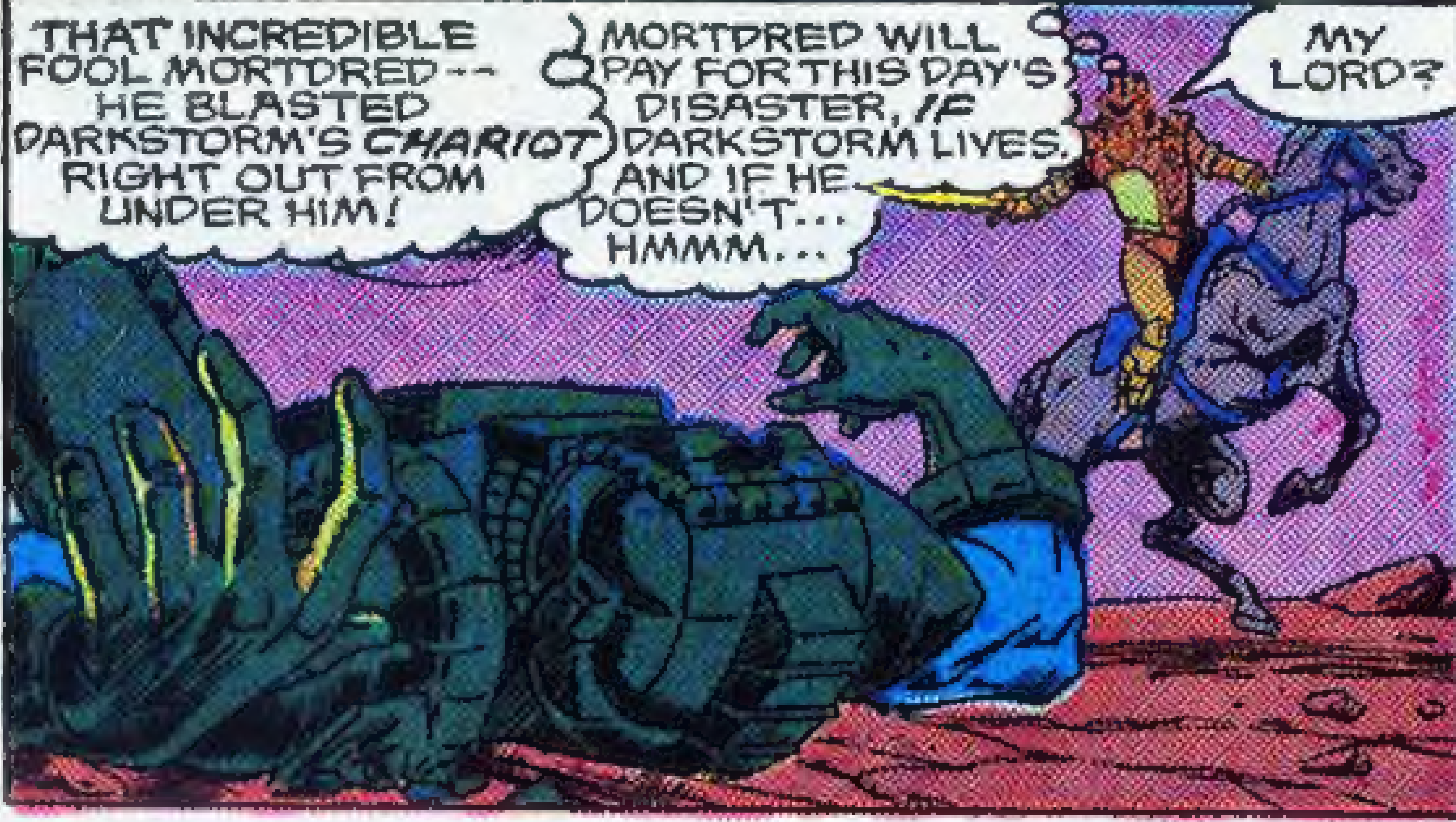
ZAM!

UH... NO...  
LASER FIRING  
WILD... ITS  
BURST... GOING  
TO HIT...

DARKSTORM!  
MASTER, LOOK OUT!

VOOM!

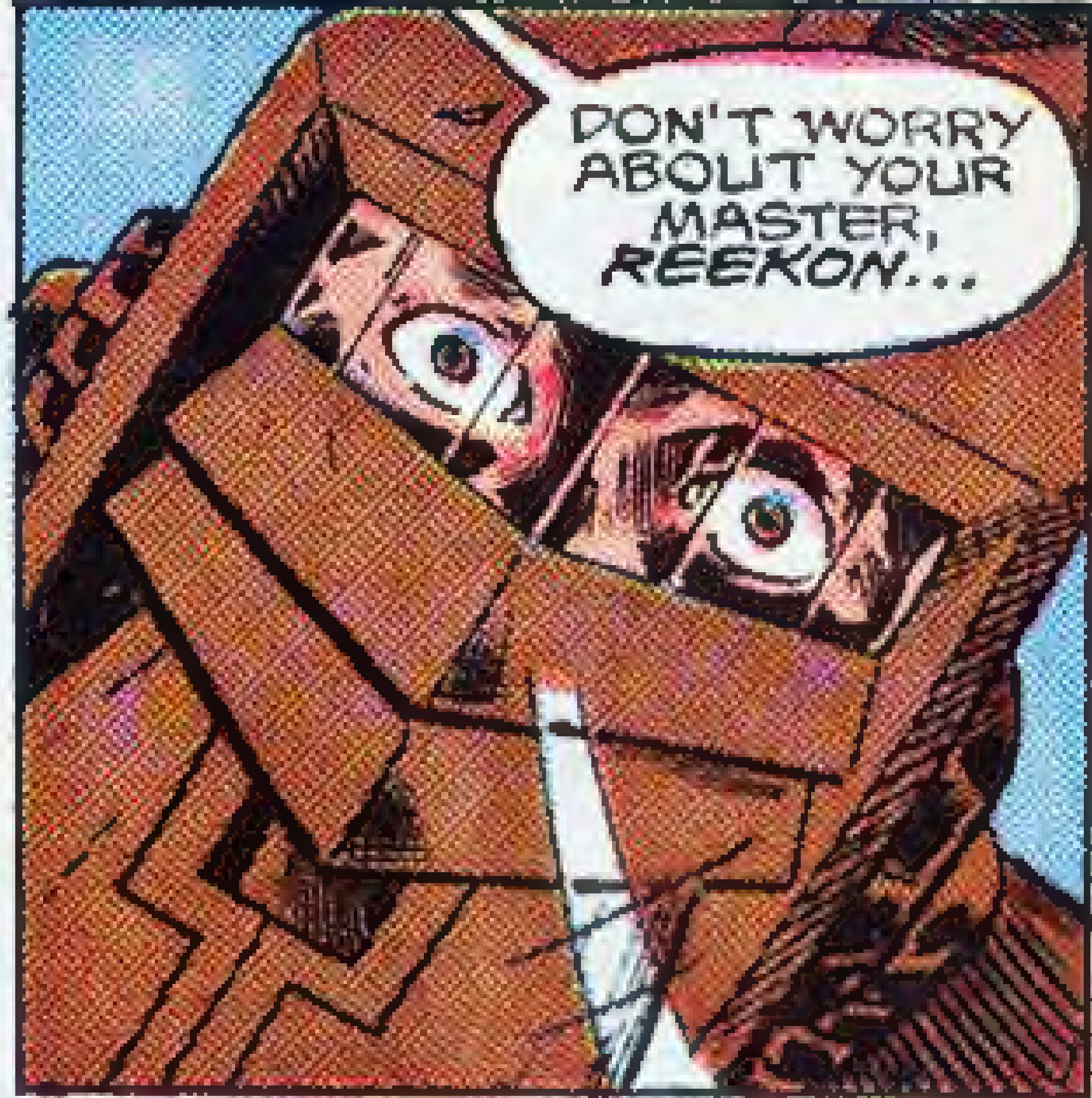




THAT INCREDIBLE FOOL MORTDRED-- HE BLASTED DARKSTORM'S CHARIOT RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER HIM!

MORTDRED WILL PAY FOR THIS DAY'S DISASTER, IF DARKSTORM LIVES. AND IF HE DOESN'T... HMMM...

MY LORD?



DON'T WORRY ABOUT YOUR MASTER, REEKON...



...WORRY ABOUT YOURSELF!

THE FATE I INTENDED FOR HIM, I NOW GIVE TO YOU!

RAWWR!



NO! UHHH!

IT'S-- UGGH--

--NOT-- UNNG--

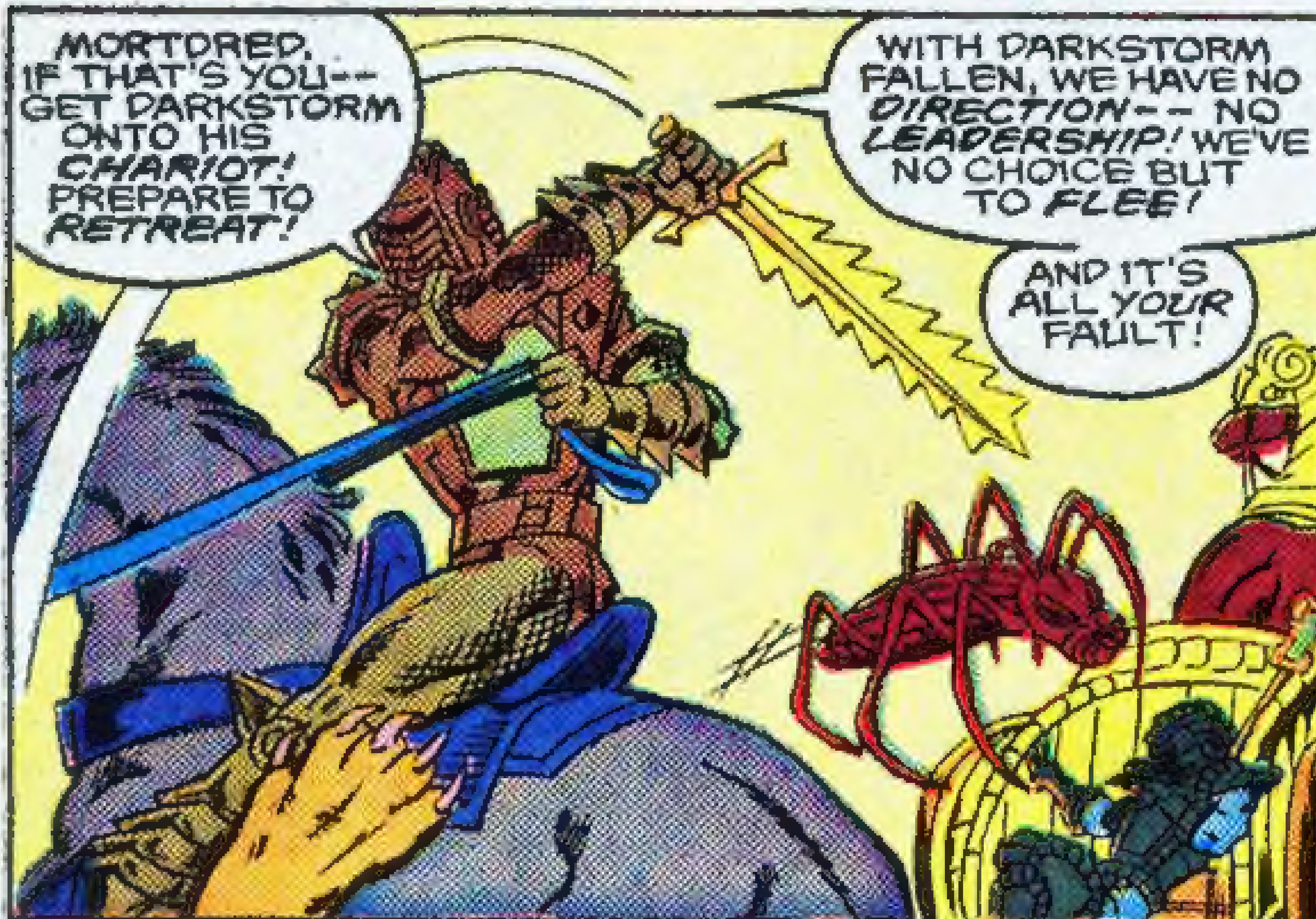
SKRASH!

--FAIR-- UNNGH!



WE WERE SO CLOSE TO VICTORY! THE KNIGHTS CHEATED!

IF DARKSTORM IS HARMED-- I MUST GO TO HIM! LET ME BECOME MY MAGICAL TOTEM!



MORTDRED, IF THAT'S YOU-- GET DARKSTORM ONTO HIS CHARIOT! PREPARE TO RETREAT!

WITH DARKSTORM FALLEN, WE HAVE NO DIRECTION-- NO LEADERSHIP! WE'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO FLEE!

AND IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!



MY FAULT?

OH YES, BLAME ME, BLAME FAITHFUL MORTDRED! WHILE YOU SPEAK AGAINST HIM, I'VE BEEN MY LORD DARKSTORM'S ONLY TRUE AND LOYAL SUBJECT!

NATURALLY THIS IS ALL MY FAULT!



SHUT UP, MORTDRED--  
BEFORE I TEACH YOU  
ANOTHER LESSON  
IN MANNERS!

YOU HEARD,  
REEKON! ALL OF  
YOU! RETREAT!

RETREAT!

BLAME  
ME, ALWAYS  
BLAME ME,  
NEVER GIVE  
ME CREDIT,  
NOT ONCE--

NEXT MORNING  
IN DARKSTORM'S  
DARK DOMAIN...

I MUST GIVE  
YOU CREDIT,  
MORTDRED...

...IF YOU WERE  
WORKING FOR  
LEORIC, YOU  
COULD NOT  
HAVE GIVEN HIM  
MORE HELP  
THAN YOU  
DID LAST  
NIGHT.

I WANTED TO SHIFT  
THE BALANCE OF  
POWER, AND THAT'S  
WHAT YOU DID--BUT  
BY LOSING THE SKY  
CLAW TO THE  
KNIGHTS, YOU SHIFTED  
IT IN THEIR FAVOR!

B-B-BUT MY  
LORD  
DARKSTORM...

AND LET'S NOT  
EVEN MENTION THE  
INJURIES YOUR  
BUMBLING CAUSED  
ME PERSONALLY.

LOCK HIM AWAY  
TILL I DECIDE  
WHAT TO DO WITH  
HIM! I DON'T WANT  
TO SEE HIS  
FACE OR HEAR  
HIS VOICE FOR  
THE NEXT WEEK  
AT LEAST!

B-B-BUT...

SILENCE,  
WORM!

B-B-BUT...

KLING!

...I WAS  
ONLY TRYING  
TO HELP.

IT JUST  
ISN'T FAIR.

PERHAPS IT'S HIS IMAGINA-  
TION. MORTDRED THINKS,  
BUT SOMEHOW HE SEEMS TO  
HEAR HARKON THE BUILDER...  
LAUGHING.

THE END